

How do I find out more?

You can make a referral to the Private Fostering Team via the Children and Families HUB by following this link www.essexeffectivesupport.org.uk and by selecting Request Support.

You can also contact The Children and Families Hub on 0345 603 7627

You can also download the Essex Private fostering App for more information on playstore. Search for Essex Private Fostering App

Reporting safeguarding concerns

Where there are immediate concerns about the safety or welfare of a child or young person:

Telephone: 0345 603 7627

In the event that a situation is urgent and cannot wait until the next working day:

Monday to Thursday 5.30pm - 9am

Friday and bank holidays 4.30pm - 9am

Telephone: 0345 606 1212

This information is issued by:
Essex County Council
Essex Social Care Academy

Contact us:
www.essex.gov.uk/report-a-concern-about-a-child
www.essex.gov.uk/privatefostering

 Essex_CC
 facebook.com/essexcountycouncil

The information contained in this document can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.

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Private Fostering

An explanation of Private Fostering for parents and carers

What is Private Fostering?

When a child/young person under 16 (18 if disabled) lives with someone who is not a close relative for more than 28 days, this is called 'Private Fostering'. The law considers a close relative to be a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt or step-parent.

It is a legal requirement to notify your Local Authority if you are privately fostering or if you plan for your child to be privately fostered. You need to tell us at least 6 weeks before the arrangement is due to start, or if the child/young person arrives suddenly, no more than 48 hours after he or she has arrived.

The following are examples of Private Fostering Arrangements:

- A young person living with the family of a boyfriend, girlfriend or a friend.
- A child or young person living with an extended family member, for example a Great Aunt or Cousin.
- A child or young person living with a family friend, perhaps as a result of parental separation, arguments at home or because their parents are overseas or working away.
- Children/young people who are in this country as part of an educational exchange programme and will be staying with a host family for a period longer than 28 days.



What are the duties of the Local Authority?

Once you have notified us, we will arrange for a member of our Private Fostering Team to visit the private foster carer and the child/young person within seven days.

We will also carry out formal checks with the police and the local health and education authorities to ensure that the child/young person is safe and that the private foster carer is able to provide a reasonable standard of care.

We complete an assessment to consider the child/young person's needs and the private foster carer's ability to meet them. If the arrangement continues, we will undertake regular visits to the home and to the child/young person and will offer advice and support.

Do I need a formal agreement to privately foster?

Private Fostering is a private arrangement between the child/young person's parents and the private foster carer. It is important to have a formal agreement with the child/young person's parents which should include information about their usual routines, their health, education, religious and cultural needs. Things to include in the agreement could be:

- How long the arrangement is planned to last?
- Who will keep in touch with the child/young person's school?
- Who can give consent over medical matters?
- How the child/young person will be provided for financially and agreeing what support the child/young person's parents will provide.
- How the child/young person can be supported to maintain relationships with their parents and wider family?

What should I do if I am the parent of a privately fostered child?

As the child/young person's parent, you are legally responsible for them and should involve yourself in all the planning and decision-making processes of the private fostering arrangement. You must notify us of the arrangement if the private foster carer has not done so already. We will assess the arrangement and if we find the arrangement to be unsuitable either during the assessment or afterwards, it is your responsibility to remove your child to a safe place.

You will be asked to provide the private foster carer with as much information about your child as possible to support them to care for your child and enable your son or daughter to settle into their new home with as little disruption as possible.

Staying in contact with your child is essential, either face to face, by telephone, post or email. You will need to tell your child and the private foster carer how you intend to stay in touch and how long you expect your child to stay in the private fostering arrangement.

How can a Private Fostering Arrangement be ended?

The Private Foster Carer or the parent can end the arrangement at any time. The Local Authority need to be informed within 48 hours of an arrangement ending.

